

What is the Added Value of 'Religion' in Multicultural Discourse?

Eugene R. Sensenig-Dabbous

The current debate concerning the exclusion of religion from the Constitution of the European Union is symptomatic of the confusion surrounding the role that faith should play in a rapidly shrinking global society. To be blind to the role that Judaism, Christianity and Islam have played in helping to develop the core values that unite the nations of Europe would be to ignore the empirical realities of the continent's long and complex history. But for many this is not the point.

Numerous representatives of the political and cultural elites in Western Europe fear that a reference to religion in the fundamental legal document upon which an expanded European Union is to be built would undermine the strict separation of church and state (Pinto 2004), seen by most Europeans as one of the pillars of Western democracy and economic prosperity (Laitin 2002, 62-66). By referring to an inclusion of religious traditions in the constitution as a *Gottesverweis* (reference to God), debate in the German speaking member states has taken this controversy to its logical conclusion. At issue is not whether or not faith-based institutions and religious thinkers and artists have played a role in the European past. At the heart of the current struggle over the European Constitution is whether or not belief in God will remain merely an object of political policy discourse or whether, in the foreseeable future, religious faith might regain its political subjectivity.

With respect to the relationship between majority and minority communities, European constitutional debate centres on questions concerning which role, if any, a secular state should play in structuring a multicultural and multiconfessional society. To answer this question, clarity must first be established concerning the term secular, upon which definitions of the multicultural and multiconfessional are commonly grounded. The position taken in this paper is based on a somewhat unorthodox approach to the secular, reflecting both this author's extensive political and academic experience in the multicultural arena in Western Europe, as well as his personal religious convictions, rooted in the tradition of the early 16th century "Radical Reformation."¹

In following, an attempt will be made to suggest additional justifications for the return to the subjectivity suggested in the above paper of George F. McLean on hermeneutics, which laid the groundwork for this conference (2003, 2-3).² These suggestions will be derived from a Tauffer³ understanding of the concept of the secular state and the "Diaspora Church," taken from the writings of Hans-Juergen Goertz, Paul Peachey, Ernst Troeltsch and John Howard Yoder. Furthermore, it shall be demonstrated that, given an Abrahamic understanding of God, as well as a subjective approach to both state and church, the unique 'added value' that only religion can offer multicultural society can become manifest in the lives of individual activists and faith-based initiatives at the outset of the 21st century.

I. The Nature of Multicultural Discourse Today

Seen from both a theoretical and practical perspective, multicultural policy and discourse have been dominated for several decades by an understanding of secularism which assumes that religion should be relegated to the personal, or at best, non-governmental, community sphere (Carter 1998, 27-36). The common culture of any given Western society was to be totally secularist, in the sense that both organised religion and faith-based political activism were to be removed from the political arena as potential obstacles to the smooth workings of the nation state.⁴ Christopher Lasch (1995, 215) argues that this has not only been the case in Europe, but also in America, despite "evidence (that) might suggest that the United States has somehow managed to escape the secularizing influences that have elsewhere transformed the cultural landscape."

Thus, it was assumed that the integration of indigenous and immigrant minorities and the mediation between ethnic and religious communities caught up in protracted conflicts over decades or even centuries could only be successfully achieved by placing religion on the sidelines of public debate (Baumann 1999; Bennett/Bhabha 1998; Kennedy 2001; Kymlicka/Norman 2000; Patten 2001; Shachar 2001). Although the dogma of multicultural approach to secularism has been contradicted by recent academic studies in the field of minority community organisation (McClain 1993; Sensenig 1997/a & 1997/b; Tilly 1990; Zweigenhaft/Domhoff 1998), as well as by practitioners in the field of faith-based social action (Wallis 1994), mainstream thinkers and activists continue to maintain that religious motivation cannot and should not play a decisive role in emancipatory social movements.⁵

Traditionally, the proponents of multiculturalism, much like the supporters of the postmodern project (Volf 1996, 61-64), maintained that societies were made up of multiple linguistic, religious, social and cultural groups, and that any ranking or subordination of this multiplicity of interests under a "master narrative" or universalist dominant culture violated the inherent diversity of society as a whole. The modern state should negotiate between these various groups and sub-groups, coordinating the interests of each for the good of the whole (Baumann 1999, 99). According to this logic, society was made up, "not of a majority and minorities, but consists of a plurality of cultural groups (...). A political society, a state consists – if it is multicultural – of diverse communities and belongs to none of them" (Raz 1994, 67-79). The difficulty inherent in this approach, according to McLean, is that these sub-societies, as envisioned by the supporters of secular multiculturalism, were indeed finite realities which interacted merely as a multiplicity; they did not belong to an "internally related and constituted community with shared and interdependent goals and powers" (2003, 14).

With McLean, I would suggest that the re-introduction of the concept of the Divine can help to overcome the divisiveness that has plagued multicultural discourse – as well as multicultural activism on the ground – over the past several decades. I will argue, namely, that an understanding of humanity as an expression of God accomplishes more than simply understanding human cultures as expressions of the Divine Absolute. Seen from a Christian perspective, a religious approach to multiculturalism also provides thinkers and organisers with the practical tools needed to overcome the various divisions that have made multiculturalism so ineffectual over the years. These include the fault lines separating, firstly, secular and religious organisations, secondly, the various denominations within the religious community and finally, the various camps now split over how to deal with the opponents of the multicultural agenda, as well as with the very enemies of interethnic and interfaith cooperation as a way of being.

II. Practical Implications and Applications

McLean suggests that "it is by acting with others and indeed in the service of others or for their good that one reaches one's full realization" (2003, 15). For a Christian, this should automatically make the religious motivation behind such self-realization manifest to others. Within the context of prevailing multicultural discourse, however, faith-based initiatives have often found it hard to keep their "light out from under a bushel."⁶ My personal experience within various human rights and minority advocacy movements has convinced me that most Christian activists tend to "sanitize" their

convictions in order to better dovetail with the aggressively non-religious mindset controlling Western public discourse at present. Although the theoretical arena in which multiculturalism is discussed is dominated by a secular approach which – as stated above – hopes to relegate religion to the private sphere, the reality in which such theories must be applied is anything but non-religious. It is in the arena of practical application of multicultural thinking that faith in God can demonstrate its true qualities and thereby "add value" to the overall movement. In the following I will attempt to synthesise McLean's concept of ethnic "horizons" with my own practical experience working with both Christian and Muslim communities and individual activists in Austria, Italy and Germany in the 1980s and 1990s.

With respect to the inventing or defining of group allegiances, Paul Kennedy suggests the following, basing his argumentation on Alberto Melucci and Stuart Hall. Cultural or ethnic "identity formation involves construction and reconstruction throughout 'the life-course of individuals and groups and through their different faces, roles and circumstances" (Melucci, 1996). Identity looks more towards an uncertain future than it harks back to a clearly defined past" (2001, 2-3). On the other hand, Michel Foucault understands group membership and inclusion as a continuous progression, going hand-in-hand with the exclusion of interchangeable cultural forms of the undesirable Other. In this ongoing process, modern victims take the places of the historically ostracised lepers, poor vagabonds and deranged minds. "With an altogether new meaning and in a very different culture, the forms would remain – essentially that major form of a rigorous division which is social exclusion but spiritual reintegration" (1988, 7). In both cases cultural awareness of the inclusiveness of our ethnic roots, at the expense of the social and culturally excluded outsiders, seems to be a phenomenon linked to modernity.

Thus it might seem that McLean's claim that a "sense of tradition is vivid in premodern and village communities, but would appear to be less so in modern centers" (2003, 5) is unjustified considering the wealth of empirical data which indicates that an awareness of tradition is largely a product of modern urbanisation and mass migration (Oezkirimli 2000; Poole 1999; Yans-McLaughlin 1990). Are we not actually a product of our desires for the future, directed backwards in order to retroactively create an imaginary cultural past?⁷ Can our religious traditions be seen as mere human constructions, created to justify the position of those currently winning the game of power politics?

A. Multicultural Horizons and "Multicultural Parochialism"

McLean has championed a faith-based position that only a superficial reading would find at odds with mainstream multicultural debate. Taken on a deeper level, his hypothetical presuppositions can easily be substantiated, both empirically and through the anecdotal experience of this author, and thereby brought into harmony with the wider theoretical community. He states: "Fortunately, the fact that ethnic sensibility has increased with, and perhaps in response to, modernization suggests that in any case there is little chance for eventual disappearance of cultural consciousness" (2003, 10). He recognises that tradition, in the process of being transmitted into the future, becomes a "new creation as this is passed on in new ways and in response to emerging challenges" (2003, 5). By – perhaps inadvertently – acknowledging that tradition is at least partially crafted in the present in order to better deal collectively with the challenges of the future, McLean finds himself in the company of the best thinkers in the fields of postmodernism and secular multiculturalism. Thus, on the surface, his concept of cultural "horizons," seen as a construction by which we creatively connect the past with the future, is nothing new. According to McLean, groups and individuals "assemble the experience" of their predecessors in order to "see far and to interpret with refined sensibility" (2003, 10). The core issue here is not whether or not traditions are constructions, this seems to be taken for granted. Comparing our "assembled" body of traditions to a collective "lens", McLean moves one step further in the direction of predominant critical discourse by emphasising that "it is important to be fully aware of it as possible, to take attentive account of its special characteristics"(2003, 10). Expressed in other words, our ability to read our traditional codes makes us culturally literate and thus able to consciously construct and deconstruct the world we live in. Up until this point religion appears to offer little in the way of added value.

The genuinely unique aspect of the theory of cultural horizons is not its recognition of the constructedness of traditions. Rather, the added value provided by McLean is to be found in the (re-)introduction of the existence of God into the multicultural equation. According to McLean, "religion can contribute to a sense of our own situatedness as a first step toward openness; for if we can realize that we are not the sole bearers of truth then we can have a questioning attitude" (2003, 11). It is by understanding ourselves "as subordinate to God and only a partial manifestation of His truth and power (which) opens in principle the possibility of recognizing that others too are reflections of the divine perfection and as such our brothers and sisters" (2003, 10).

However, acknowledging that human beings are "in principle" capable of recognising God's hand in other peoples and cultures is only the first step in actually realising this potential. McLean maintains correctly that the first step to be taken in the practical application of a faith-based approach to multiculturalism is to accept the fact that we are all the product of our respective cultural "horizons", i.e. "that we have been born and raised in this family, neighborhood and group and that this shapes our vision (...)" (2003, 10). If our respective "horizons" are indeed determined by "all that can be seen from the vantage point of one's cultural tradition" (2003, 10), and cultural traditions are "assembled," i.e. a collective construction crafted to meet the needs of the present and future, how do we move from this inherent parochialism⁸ to a more comprehensive – or even global – approach to multiculturalism? Can the parochial be multicultural?

To return to the issue of subjectivity introduced at the outset of this paper, the interface between "social experience and philosophy" (2003, 2) that McLean has so aptly demonstrated on the theoretical level in "Hermeneutics of Tolerance," must be tested on the playing field on which people of faith live their daily lives, if it is to be of any practical significance. It would therefore seem wise to anchor faith-based multicultural discourse on the level of the parish church, for it is from the steeple – or minaret for that matter – that we traditionally see the horizons of our respective local communities. Not only does a congregation of believers offer multicultural projects a traditional framework within which to further "assemble" (or construct) our mutual and distinct ethnic and religious identities, it is normally on the local level that both religious faith and social activism⁹ play themselves out in day-to-day experience.

In the following, I will attempt to move from the oft times tediously abstract to the practical implications and applications of faith-based multiculturalism, promised at the outset of this section. In so doing, reference will be made to results of my practical experience linking interfaith dialogue with social activism across confessional lines.

B. Dialectics: The Faith Plus Action Interface

The view from one's parish church steeple or local mosque's minaret focuses one's attention on those social needs closest at hand. It also anchors our intellectual and spiritual vantage point – or "horizon" – in the practical traditions of our respective faith communities. Working on the local level, with interfaith initiatives in a major Austrian city and small industrial town

with predominantly Muslim and Eastern Orthodox immigrant communities, almost two decades of academic research and political activism have taught me that faith in the Abrahamic God can often be the common language that divides us. I have come to the conclusion that theological discussions make little sense when they are not directly tied to immediate social concerns. My personal experience seems to be in sync with the results of scholarly studies and practical reports of a similar nature (Nielsen 1999, 118-128; Rex 1996, 216-240; Wallis 2000, 59-67).

The interface between social action and religious faith can prove productive in a truly dialectic sense. Not only does hands-on interaction between various ethnic, linguistic and religious communities bring their respective members closer together, it also bridges the gap between theology and their personal lives in a highly concrete manner. When expressed in direct action, abstract theological principles become tangible for the culturally Other. In the opposite direction, experience gathered over time with partners of another religion enables participants to draw conclusions about the theological tenets that build the foundation of the Other's faith community. The following specific examples will hopefully help to flesh out this point.

C. Dialectics in action: elements of global society and communities of cooperation

Whereas debate between Christians and Muslims can prove counterproductive when theological issues are tackled directly, the implications of these two world faiths, in the lives of individuals, vividly demonstrate what both have in common. Three topics, which have a direct impact on most of our personal lives, can illustrate this principle.

1. Business Ethics

Both Islam and Christianity provide clear guidelines for the behaviour of entrepreneurs and employers in any give context. The growing number of immigrant Muslim businessmen and women in the West makes this topic a good platform with which to initiate interfaith dialogue. It also demonstrates that both faith communities must exercise social responsibility as leaders in the cities and towns in which they live together. This issue could also prove valuable in Asian and African countries in which large numbers of Muslims and Christians work and live together.

2. Community Infrastructure

Traditionally, recent immigrants settle in towns and city districts that are inhabited by lower income native-born, majority populations, as well as the members of earlier waves of immigration. Thus they share a common interest in the improvement of schools, public transportation, healthcare, recreational facilities and the like. City and state immigrant councils and urban minority integration schemes provide a platform for coordination of these common interests. Here, faith-based initiatives and individual activists often play a leading role.

3. Social Justice

Income disparities, long working hours, unhealthy and dangerous working conditions, equal access to education and fair hiring and promotion policies are all issues that directly affect both minority and majority populations. The European and North American Christian Social movement provides a rich foundation on which to build coalitions with immigrants from predominantly non-Christian countries of origin. Here, the labour unions and other social welfare institutions can play a significant organisational role. This field of activity also offers an opportunity to deal with the gender equality issue, without insinuating that one religious tradition is superior to another. Improved pay scales and career opportunities for lower income girls and women "raise all boats," for both Christian and Muslim families.

D. Experience with social interaction: leading to theological and secular dialogue

Dealing with social issues from the perspective of the local steeple or minaret can help people of faith demonstrate to each other, as well as to their non-religious neighbors, that their long-term commitment to the overall community is genuine. Over time, bands of trust can lead to an interest in inter-faith discussion and debate, whereby supposed differences can be dealt with frankly and dividing lines mutually accepted. With respect to Muslim-Christian dialogues, issues such as the role of the (welfare) state, gender equality, the importance of the family and the use of violence immediately come to mind. Here differences can be overcome, while topics such as the nature of the Holy Spirit and Christ or the validity of Mohammad's claim to Abrahamic prophethood can be excluded or saved for later debate. I have

seen the faith-action interface work in practice and am firmly convinced that my Bosnian, Turkish and Arab Muslim partners were genuinely interested in my personal faith and the historical roots of my denomination.

Nevertheless, McLean rightly points out that "fundamentalism, intellectual Balkanization, ethnic or communal strife, and even genocide" (2003, 10) can also be the results of the religious and ethnic parochialism closely tied to political and/or economic power. A highly destructive example of this phenomenon is the approach of many radical Christian and Muslim organisations, which have instrumentalised social activism in order to win adherents from their own faith and attempt to convert members from the ranks of the cultural Other.¹⁰ This abuse of the faith-action interface has led many to become highly suspicious of faith-based social activism and has made the work of those genuinely interested in inter-faith dialogue all the more difficult. It has also proved to be one of the most difficult issues to deal with when attempting to build bridges between faith-based and non-religious social organisations.

At the heart of the attempt to strengthen the ranks of one's own religious community at the expense of others lies, what Paul Peachey (in Peachey/McLean/Kromkowski) has termed, the 'triumphalist' approach to the Abrahamic covenant, according to which the people of God "will carry the day" (1997, 7-8) establishing a Greater Israel dominated by Zionism, a Europe and America under the control of the Christian Church or a global Umma under Islamic rule. As an alternative, Peachey offers an approach rooted in the Täufer understanding of the Abrahamic covenant, based on the concept of 'Diaspora' or dispersion. "Diaspora is a seminal concept, evoking the image of scattered seed, in this instance, the scattering of salvific potential, ready to spring up wherever it falls into receptive soil. Envisioned in a variety of images in Hebrew prophecy, this imagery resounds in the various logoi of Jesus and finds parallels as well in the Qur'anic texts" (1997, 10). Peachey's concept of a Diaspora-based form of inter-faith dialogue is an expression of the theology of the Radical Reformation. Laying the foundation for the modern, secular concept of a strict separation of church and state (Troeltsch 1928, 52-53), the early 16th century Täufers rejected, as one of the first movements in modern European history, the 'triumphalist', state/church concept of "*Corpus Christianum*," by which "the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches claimed the guardianship of all cultural and public life, a claim which could not be realized without coercion" (Blanke 1957, 68).

The proposition that Diaspora can be an alternative to the 'triumphalist' understanding to a faith/action interface is essentially based on an assumption that the Abrahamic covenant is neither rooted in land nor posterity (in modern terms: territorial and ethnic/racial domination), but rather based on trust and submission to God's will for His people, irrespective of their location or bloodline. This appears to be the message contained in God's demand that Abraham kill his legitimate¹¹ heir, Isaac, in order to break his dependency on traditional understandings of power politics. This stands in stark contrast to the tendency on the part of all three Abrahamic religions to re-establish theocratic oppression. "Despite a strong universalist impulse in the Islamic primordium, no more than in its Judaic and Christian antecedents, has that primordium been self-guaranteeing. Once a sufficient degree of religious monopoly prevails, the impulse to invoke the Abrahamic sanction for Creation-grounded order becomes all but irresistible. The Call that redefines popular cohesion from within, or 'from below' (*shalom*), is turned into a rationale for external subjugation 'from above' (*pax-ification*)" (Peachey 1997, 6).

For Christians, the Diaspora approach to earthly power opens up new possibilities for interaction, both with other religious as well as with the larger, non-religious multicultural community. The political economy of power politics following the Resurrection did not change. For the believers – and thus for faith-based action – however, the world has dramatically shifted. According to the position taken by the Radical Reformation, the "characteristic of the reign of Christ is that evil, without being blotted out, is channelled by God, in spite of itself, to serve His purposes. (...) Vengeance is not thereby redeemed or made good; it is nonetheless rendered subservient to God's purposes, as an anticipation of the promised ultimate defeat of sin" (Yoder 1998, 62).

This has enormous consequences for an understanding of the state as a "semi-evil"¹² representative of the affluent and powerful and thus for the relationship to the community of believers. If faith-based action considers the government and the powers it represents to be inherently evil – though semi-subdued by Christ – then the "all but irresistible impulse" to instrumentalize official institutions to coerce others can be withstood. If one understands that it is in the very nature of the state, as representative of the power elites, to "punish the innocent and reward the guilty," but that in many cases the state actually does choose "the best alternative rather than adding evil to evil" (Yoder 1998, 63), Christians can more easily submit to the rule of the state "not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience" (Romans 13:5, NIV). This means that when governmental force

is wielded fairly it must be respected. However, Christians are required to peacefully resist the political authorities, even at the risk of their own lives, when the state's use of violence threatens to violate the just principles revealed by God to his people in both the Old and New Testaments.¹³

This Christian embrace of the secular nature of the state has a dual function, both aspects of which could enhance multicultural discourse and action in the coming decades. By standing up to what Taufers have christened the 'Constantinian temptation,' i.e. the tendency on the part of religious institutions to instrumentalize the powers of the state in order to advance the Abrahamic goals of charity and social justice, the dangers of religiously based communal strife and intellectual Balkanisation, so aptly described by McLean, can be held in check. An approach to social change, and to the culturally Other that negates the use of force, would also lend credibility to faith-based organisations and improve their standing vis-à-vis the non-religious institutions and initiatives that currently dominate multicultural discourse in a secular environment. However, all these admittedly desirable improvements are not truly unique and could be achieved without the added value of an Abrahamic faith in God. The one area in which Christians – and I would argue also Muslims and Jews – do have something qualitatively different to offer multicultural society at large can be found in the way in which we interact with those who oppose, reject and persecute us.

Acts such as 'sitting down with tax collectors and prostitutes' and 'loving our enemies'¹⁴ require people of faith, to rely on a Being that is greater than they. Although by no means the historical rule, representatives of the Abrahamic faiths have time and again demonstrated that they were able to overcome their fear and hatred of ethnic or religious oppressors and to embrace them as human beings. But of more significance for multicultural discourse is the question whether they were ever able to embrace the representatives of powerful political castes, who like the racist and anti-minority parties in modern Western Europe, were propagating the principles of fear, hate, exploitation and discrimination and using their control over the coercive and manipulative powers of the state to enforce them.

III. The Added Value of Religion: Shared Values and Constructed Identity

When asked publicly, in the winter of 1993, whether he could love the Serbian nationalist militiamen who were literally martyring his people at that time, the renowned Croatian theologian, Miroslav Volf, responded, "No, I cannot – but as a follower of Christ I think I should be able to."¹⁵ His

response incorporates both aspects of the dual function of Christian secularity referred to above. Individually, and as a member of an ethnic group experiencing horrible atrocities, he knew he could only reach out to his enemy through the strength provided to him by the Holy Spirit and the role model function of the man, Jesus Christ. At the same time he demonstrated that he is aware of his ultimate weakness; that embracing the representatives of a political system was not a gesture that would be responded to in kind. He also must have been aware – although he did not state this in his study – that his own government, as well as those of the other warring parties in former Yugoslavia, was also notoriously guilty of heinous war crimes, though not on the same grandiose scale. Thus, to love the culturally Other he had to free himself of the well-documented Balkan "triumphalism" of the warring Sunni Muslim, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic parties of southeast Europe.

This concrete example of religious added value leads to a concluding appraisal of how a secular, Diaspora-based understanding of our common Abrahamic faith can help overcome the divisiveness so typical of current Western multicultural debate. To return to the example mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the secularism now being propagated by the majority of those states, now members – or shortly to become members – of the European Union, is based on a cultural construction that has very little to do with the realities on the ground in Europe and the Mediterranean Basin. Not only does it ignore the fact that the majority of those denizens of non-European origin – now being characterised as the cultural Other – still overwhelmingly use religious categories to define concepts such as good, justice, progress and responsibility, it actively hinders their meagre steps toward integration. The attempt to force these immigrants to assimilate into Western society by robbing them of their public manifestations of spirituality and the divine will eradicate one of the key bridges that could permit them to interact as equals with members of the majority population.

More important, however, is the already apparent common understanding, on the part of many proponents of both secularist multiculturalism and inter-faith multicultural dialogue, that our social, religious, linguistic and ethnic traditions are indeed products of a both unconscious and intentional construction. If we, as separate communities, are now becoming aware that a large portion of what we consider to be our unique identities has been collectively assembled, it should be possible – assuming a limited amount of good will – to deconstruct and reassemble these traditions in a manner that includes all members of society, old and new.

The added value of religion in this process is to supply that aspect of dialogue which human beings, left to their own resources, are incapable of comprehending, let alone implementing in conflict-ridden situations. The multicultural, parochial approach, suggested above, allows faith-based initiatives and individuals to discover the overlapping goals and tenets of their common desire to submit to the will of God. This constructive experience can facilitate debate over thorny theological issues on which consensus will be hard to establish, if at all. Thus far, however, religion remains simply another method of conflict resolution, an additional confidence-building measure or 'roadmap to reconciliation,' so to speak.

In the process of reassembling a multicultural identity for Europe, the Middle East or any other conflict-prone region of the world, the genuinely unique 'added value' that faith in God can provide is to be found in the inclusion of warring parties whose conflicts of interest (objectively or ostensibly) prevent them from 'embracing' in the way Miroslav Volf has described. The role of religion is not to duplicate the mandate of the state by attempting to coerce or defeat groups or individuals whose agenda is diametrically opposed to that of multiculturalism, interfaith dialogue and social justice.¹⁶ The secular state, according to a Diaspora-based Christian understanding of politics, is well equipped and sanctioned by God to reward good and punish evil. This understanding of religion would also prevent Christians from supporting a call to overthrow or otherwise violently oppose a repressive or exploitative political regime as has often been propagated in the past by adherents of Liberation Theology or the underground religious movements in the former Communist states of Eastern Europe.

At the outset of a new century, which lessons can faith-based initiatives learn from conditions prevalent 100 years ago? Reviewing the ethnically and confessionally motivated horrors we have experienced – either directly or indirectly – in our own lifetimes, where could the added value of religion have played a more positive role, but didn't? What went wrong?

Today, the secularist majority in the West seems to be strangely ill at ease when confronted with a growing interest throughout the world for spirituality and faith-based solutions to social and cultural crises. The approaching 500 year anniversary of the Radical Reformation¹⁷ seems to coincide with an equally widespread interest within religious circles for the need to reassess the secularity of the state and to redefine the role of the church within a predominantly secular global society. This might just provide one of those rare historical opportunities that could enable us all to participate in the deconstruction and reassembling of our common, global, cultural identity. It

will remain the role of believers to guarantee that no one, friend or foe, is excluded from this process.

Endnotes

¹ The term Radical Reformation was coined, according to Littell (1957, 123), by George Hunston Williams, in order to distinguish between the state-centric – or "magisterial" (Obrigkeits) – branches of the early 16th century Christian reform movement (Calvinism, Lutheranism, Anglicanism) and the "Free Churches" which propagated radical pacifism, a complete separation of church and state and the purely symbolic nature of the sacraments. The early German and Dutch Free Churches, e.g. Hutterites, Mennonites, Amish, Swiss Brethren, Moravians etc., referred to themselves either as Täufer (Baptists) or, more commonly, simply 'Brethren,' maintaining that the predominant practice of paedobaptism was illegitimate. In this paper, the historical and contemporary adherents of the Radical Reformation are referred to as Taufers.

² A good bit of the ideation of this unpublished manuscript can be found in more extended form in, McLean, George F. *Hermeneutics for a Global Age: Lectures in Shanghai and Hanoi*. Washington DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2003.

³ See endnote 1; the more conventional term *Wiedertäufer* or Anabaptist (rebaptiser) was introduced during the early Reformation in order to accelerate the *Täuferverfolgung* (persecution and physical extermination of the 'Baptists'). Whereas conventional trials for heresy could take several weeks or even months, the crime of rebaptism (as forbidden by the Nicean Creed and the Justinian imperial code of law) was – along with the denial of Trinitarianism – immediately punishable by death. The term Anabaptist "was never used by the Anabaptists themselves but often vigorously objected to by them because of the opprobrium and criminal character attached to the name." See: keyword 'anabaptism' from the Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, 06/Jan/2004, 10:55 AM, <http://www.anabaptists.org/history/mennoen1.html>.

In order to distinguish the German-Dutch Taufers from the more recent English 'Baptist' movement, mid-20th century North American Taufers re-introduced the term Anabaptism. This somewhat unfortunate decision became necessary because modern Baptists – although practising adult baptism – do not adhere to a strict separation of church and state and – more importantly – accept Christian participation in the armed services and police force. See: keyword 'anabaptism' from the Canadian Mennonite

Encyclopedia/Online,06/Jan/2004,10:52AM,<http://www.mhsc.ca/index.asp?content=http://www.mhsc.ca/encyclopedia/search.html>.

⁴ According to Laitin (2002, 77), the enlargement of the European Union will actually secure secular traditions in Europe. "Although there is significant cultural diversity between nations and between states in Europe, that diversity is contained within coherent repertoires which enable them to act appropriately (that is, according to local standards) throughout the European Union (...) In religion, there is an European Union consensus in support of secular Christianity, a respect for national churches that do not meddle in political life, and recognition as well of minority religious groups as long as the religious expression of these groups is contained within the community."

⁵ During a Question/Answer session following his last lecture in Lebanon (at American University of Beirut/Fares Hall in April 2003), the late Palestinian-American intellectual, Edward Said, stated, in a manner indicative of this position, that Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King Jr., Desmond Tutu and the leaders of the 16th century Radical Reformation did not base their movements on their personal faith, but rather that these men merely used religious rhetoric to motivate the respective oppressed masses of their times, which would have been otherwise inaccessible using more rational arguments and thus difficult to motivate politically.

⁶ "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:15-16. New Testament, King James Version) In this context, reference is being made to the fact that many religious organisations do not incorporate their source of motivation into their multicultural activities, as opposed to Social Democrats (and other leftists), Liberals, feminists, Greens, alternative globalisation activists and others, who have no qualms about declaring the ideological roots of their dedication and commitment.

⁷ Many examples of this can be found in both European and Middle Eastern history; they include Hollywood's reinterpretation of American history to help justify US foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, the rediscovery of examples of ancient ethnic heroism during the wars in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s or the mythical Phoenician roots of today's Lebanese nation, as described by Salibi (1988, 170-179).

⁸ According to Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary, "parochial" initially meant "of or pertaining to a parish or parishes." (New York: Gramercy, 1996) The German equivalent, i.e. *Kirchturmspolitik*, offers an even more interesting linguistic parallel with respect to McLean's thinking by explicitly citing the church tower (*Kirch Turm*), or steeple perspective of the horizons of one's cultural traditions.

⁹ Here allusion is being made to the New Testament book of James 2:14-17 in which both religious faith and hands-on social action (e.g. for those in need of clothing, warmth and food) are propagated, for "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." (New International Version)

¹⁰ Examples of this abusive practice can be found in Accad (1997), Cooper (1997) and Nickel (1999). Unfortunately, some Evangelical Taufers (both Mennonites and Brethren) have joined the ranks of those – predominantly North American – Christians who are convinced that Muslims are Satan worshippers. "When Muslims become disciples of Jesus, they go through a major spiritual struggle. Conversion involves a deliverance from one kingdom and transference into another. Jesus told Saul that his future mission work would involve turning Gentiles 'from the power of Satan to God' (Acts 26:18)" (Nickel 1999, 112).

¹¹ Interestingly enough, the modern political term 'legitimate rule,' is founded in the logic of the bloodline. According to Kogan, the birth of Isaac appeared to substantiate "God's assurances of land and posterity, which Abraham had doubted on several occasions in the past (...), (b)ut then, suddenly, the narrative takes an unexpected turn and all is thrown into uncertainty once again" (1997, 109). Abraham is thus forced to give up all hope of establishing a traditional empire based on divine right and legitimate blood, and to accept a radically new concept of God's people by which neither family, territory nor national identity are decisive.

¹² Based on Romans 13 and parallel passages in 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Peter 2, Yoder describes the state as the incarnation of evil, "semi-subdued" by Christ. "When the New Testament attributes this lordship over history and the powers to Christ, it means that the essential change which has taken place is not within the realm of the old aeon, vengeance and the state, where there is really no change; it is rather that the new aeon revealed in Christ takes primacy over the old, explains the meaning of old, and will finally vanquish it. The state did not change with the coming of Christ; what changed was the coming of the new aeon which proclaimed doom of the old one" (1998, 62-63).

¹³ Christ's command to "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matthew 22:21 NIV) takes on a more concrete character when combined with the Apostle Paul's letter to the Church in Rome. Interpreted by Yoder, it has an almost Socratic ring to it, whereby the state's inherent duty is to balance out the interests of various power players within the *polis* and must always be obeyed when it fulfils this role. Accordingly, if "the use of force is such as to protect the innocent and punish the evildoers, to preserve peace so that 'all men might come to the knowledge of the truth,' then that state may be considered as fitting within God's plan, as subject to the reign of Christ. This positive evaluation cannot apply to a given state in all that it does, but at best in one case at a time, each time it chooses the best alternative rather than adding evil to evil. It is, however, possible, and even frequent, for a state to abandon this function, to deny any sort of submission to a moral order higher than itself, and in so doing to punish the innocent and reward the guilty. That state is what we find in Revelation 13, best described as demonic" (Yoder 1998, 63).

¹⁴ Knowledge of Christ's insistence that his followers must "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you," (Luke 6:27-28, NIV) is much better anchored in common, early 21st century global culture than is the reference to him being "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Luke 7:34, NIV). His willingness to associate publicly with the compradors and Quislings of his day (i.e. the Jews who collected taxes for the Roman occupation forces and habitually overcharged their own people) illustrates that Christians have a unique role to play when dealing with political pariah of our own time, such as the leaders of the Front National, Volkspartei, Flams Blok, Freiheitliche Partei or Lega Nord in France, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria and Italy respectively.

¹⁵ Volf's portrayal of this scene is placed at the outset of his intellectually challenging study, "Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation." His is just one of a long list of examples in modern history, including the pacifist leaders of the Radical Reformation, the American civil rights movement and the Anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa, of Christians who struggled with their faith in God in order to deal in a genuinely new way with individual oppressors and the organised coercion of an oppressive state. Volf writes: "After I finished my lecture Professor Juergen Moltmann stood up and asked one of his typical questions, both concrete and penetrating: but can you embrace a *cetnik*?' It was the winter of 1993. For months now the notorious Serbian

fighters called *četnik* had been sowing desolation in my native country, herding people into concentration camps, raping women, burning down churches, and destroying cities. I had just argued that we ought to embrace our enemies as God has embraced us in Christ. Can I embrace a *četnik* – the ultimate other, so to speak, the evil other? What would justify the embrace? Where would I draw the strength for it? What would it do to my identity as a human being and as a Croat? It took me a while to answer, though I immediately knew what I wanted to say. 'No, I cannot – but as a follower of Christ I think I should be able to.' (...) How does one remain loyal both to the demand of the oppressed for justice and to the gift of forgiveness that the Crucifixion offered to the perpetrators" (1996, 9)?

¹⁶ Unfortunately, many faith-based, multicultural activists have closed ranks with the secularist mainstream in their struggle against the neo-fascist and radical rightist movements. In so doing they have forfeited a unique opportunity to break bread with tax collectors, so to speak. An example of this, taken from my own experience in Austria, is the position taken by the Catholic and Lutheran lay organisations after the radical right came to power in Austria in 2000. One of the common anti-Haider slogans of that year was "*Ausgrenzung der Ausgrenzer!*" (Exclude the Excluders!), which was supported by a platform that included a large number of Christian organisations. Not a single Christian initiative attempted to promote dialogue between the state-sponsored "excluders" and the victims of their exclusion.

¹⁷ Martin Luther's break with the Roman Catholic church on 31 October 1517 marks the beginning of the Reformation. The split between the state-centric Lutheran and Calvinist branches of the Reformation, on the one hand, and the proponents of a radical separation of church and state, on the other, is traditionally dated 21 January 1525, with the lay adult baptism of leading dissidents who opposed Ulrich Zwingli's use of the Zurich city council to enforce his Protestant reforms.

"The action taken that evening was spontaneous under the deeply felt pressure of the presence of the Holy Spirit. There had been no advance calculation that 'the way to make the break would be to baptize adults,' and no strategic weighing of whether this was the right time to make the break. The significance of this act lay not so much in the proper practice of baptism itself, as in the creation of a new, visible church body distinct from the established church controlled by the state, as was true of the all-inclusive establishment of medieval Catholicism. Thus the prayer meeting and the events of January 21 came to be the formal beginning of Anabaptism as a visible believers' church with emphases distinct from both Roman Catholicism and emerging Protestantism" (Dyck 1981, 49).

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